

Together in Christ – Part 1

Ephesians 2:11-22 - NCBC, July 10, 2022

Main Point: **Jesus' death is the answer to your alienation with God and others.**

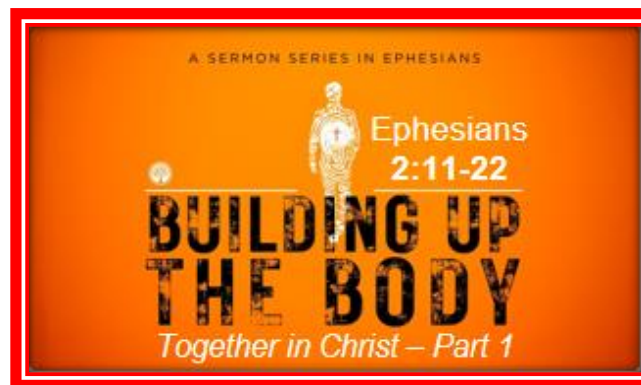
- Christian, remember your past alienation apart from Jesus' death (11-12)
 - Socially with others (11)
 - Separated from the Circumcision (external religion)
 - Spiritually with God (12)
 - Separated from the Christ
 - Separated from the Commonwealth of Israel
 - Separated from the Covenants of promise
 - Separated from the Confidence of hope
 - Separated from the Creator in the world
- Christian, realize your present reconciliation in Jesus' death (13-18)
 - Socially with others (13-15)
 - The "far off" are now brought near
 - The "two" are now made one
 - The "hostile" are now in peace
 - Spiritually with God (16-18)
 - Sinners are now friends with God
 - Sinners are now at peace with God
 - Sinners are now welcomed by God
- Christian, rejoice in our present identification together in Christ (19-22)
 - Citizens in God's kingdom (19a)
 - Children in God's family (19b)
 - Construction materials in God's temple (20-22)

Application: **Reflect your peace with God by making peace with others.**

Opening Announcements:

- Our **Vacation Bible School** begins tomorrow, **July 11th at 6pm** here at New Castle Bible Church! Please pray for God's favor on this Gospel ministry for the salvation of many children this week!
- **Friday, July 15th** caps off our thrilling VBS week with an **All-Church Cookout and Pool Party** at the Tremont Pool and Pavilion at **6:15p**. Bring a side or dessert to share!

<<Ancient Words>>



What a privilege to take God's written love letter to heart this morning as we worship Jesus together.

Let's continue our worship by opening our copies of God's Word to **Ephesians chapter 2**.



If you do not have a Bible with you, simply raise your hand as our ushers come by, and we'd love to give you a copy of these ancient and life-changing words from God.

And while you're preparing for our Scripture reading from **Ephesians chapter 2**, let me share a quick story with you.



This past April the mayor of Mackinaw invited us to host a community church service in Veteran's Park on the Sunday morning of Mack-A-Fest. He appreciates how God is working in Mackinaw through local churches, and recognizes that the Mack-A-Fest weekend offers a great

opportunity for churches to proclaim a message of hope and peace to our dark and hurting world.

How could we possibly say no? So next Sunday at 11 am we are transporting our worship service into the community, and praying that God will be glorified as we invite our Mackinaw community to join us for this very special time of worship together.

So please listen carefully ... because next Sunday's schedule is obviously different than normal. Next Sunday, July 17th, we will still have our 8am service here in this building as normal.

But then we will not have any programming during the 9:30a hour, as we will be setting up for the park service that starts at **11am**. Please arrive to Veteran's Park extra early so that you have plenty of time to find parking and set up your own lawn chairs and help us love our community well with cheerful hospitality and love. Make sure to wear your smiles and your name tags, and be willing to help however may be needed as this will be an "all-hands-on-deck" opportunity. We are not planning any children's programming during the 11am park service, so families are encouraged to just bring blankets and chairs and enjoy this special time of outdoor worship together.

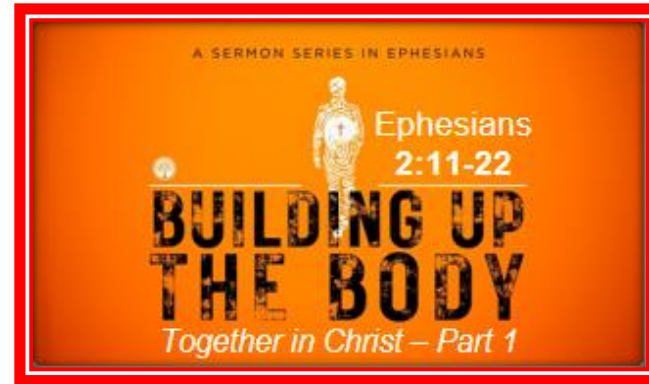
So church, please pray fervently for God's grace to powerfully work through us this week. Pray God will glorify Himself through our VBS and 1Way Kidz programming this week, through the witness of our Mack-A-Fest Food Tent volunteers on Saturday evening, and

through this Community Worship Service on Sunday. This week is full of God-sized ministry. So let's glorify God through humble dependence and missional faithfulness together this week!!

Now let's turn our attention to the Ancient Words found in **Ephesians chapter 2, verses 11-22**.

Paul's Letter to the EPHESIANS				 BUILDING UP THE BODY		
Focus	Calling			Therefore 	Conduct	
	What God has Done			How We Should Live		
CH.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Topics	Spiritual Blessings & Prayer	Our Position in Christ	"Mystery" Revealed & Prayer	Walk in Unity & Holiness	Walk in Love & Wisdom	Stand against Evil
<i>God has united us in grace so that we may live in love together ...all to the praise of His glory!</i>						

This second half of **Ephesians chapter 2** is all about **Christians' position in Christ together**. Paul wants his readers to understand that *God has united us in grace so that we may live in love together ...all to the praise of His glory!* It doesn't matter if you are a Jew, or a non-Jew which is called a Gentile. The grace of God unites all people together in Christ as one body called the church.



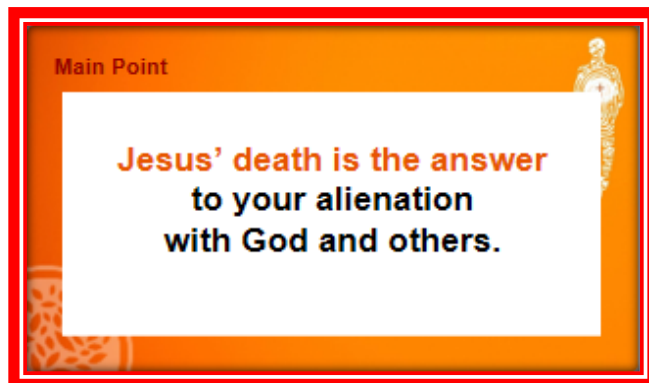
So let's read the Scripture now. If you're able, please stand in honor of the public reading of God's Word, as I read the ESV translation, from **Ephesians chapter 2, starting in verse 11**:

*¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—
¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So*

then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

This is the reading of God's Word. Let's Pray.

Our world is full of broken relationships because our world is full of sin. **James chapter 4** teaches clearly that the root cause for all conflict is sinful desire. Sin causes separation between people and God, and sin causes division between people and people. The fundamental root cause of all your broken relationships is always sin, and that's why Paul writes this second half of **Ephesians chapter 2** to teach that,



Jesus' death is the answer to your alienation with God and others. O this is such a timely message for all of us.

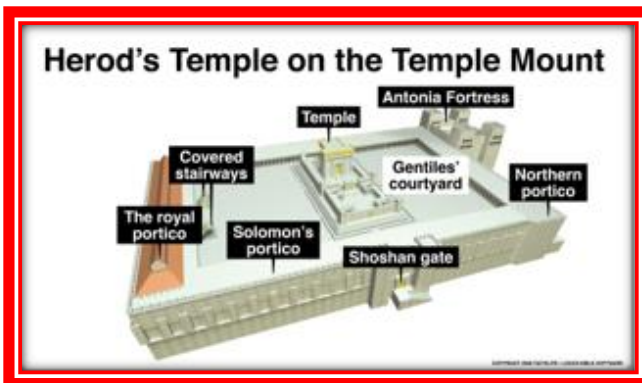
Better politics or more laws are not the ultimate answer to the relational brokenness we are all experiencing. Education or tolerance training is not the final answer for our divided society. Wealth distribution or inequity is not the greatest cause for our fighting. Even the restoration of fathers to the place of biblical priority within families – although significant – is not a sufficient answer to the separation that every person on the earth experiences with God and with others.

You will never experience relational wholeness with God or others as long as you're living in sin. But listen... because Jesus' substitutionary death actually covers your sin and removes your sin forever. And once sin is out of the way, all our vertical and horizontal relationships can be reconciled back to unity and oneness. Jesus' death is the answer to your alienation, or your separation or brokenness of relationship with God and others.

So **Ephesians 2** is immensely practical for every one of us today. Are you suffering through the disorienting pain of a broken relationship with someone right now? Do you personally feel spiritually disconnected or even at war with God? The cross of Christ has killed sin's animosity, and made you forever one with God and His people forever!

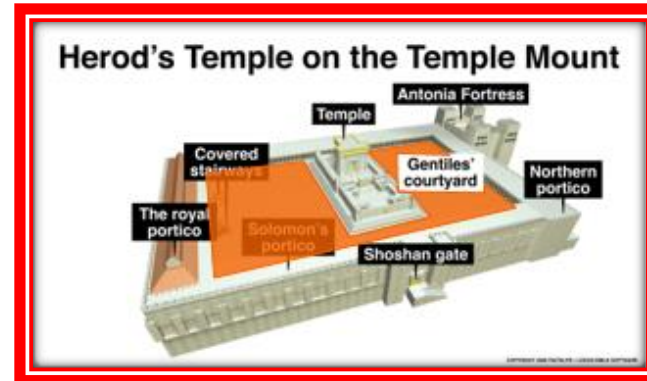
Today's passage takes a deep dive into the ageless conflict between Jewish and Gentile sinners to highlight the reconciling power of the cross. Jesus' death truly unites all kinds of people together in Christ – making from both groups one new people of God called the church. This is radical, life-changing revelation.

But before we begin we must spend our first 15 minutes reviewing Herod's Temple in Jerusalem. Because – listen carefully, the Jewish temple in Jerusalem was actually a visible symbol of alienation between Jews and Gentiles. Paul was clearly thinking about the Jewish temple when he wrote **Ephesians 2**. So we will best understand what Paul is writing *after* we've first reviewed how the Jewish temple was a visible symbol of relational brokenness and separation because of sin.

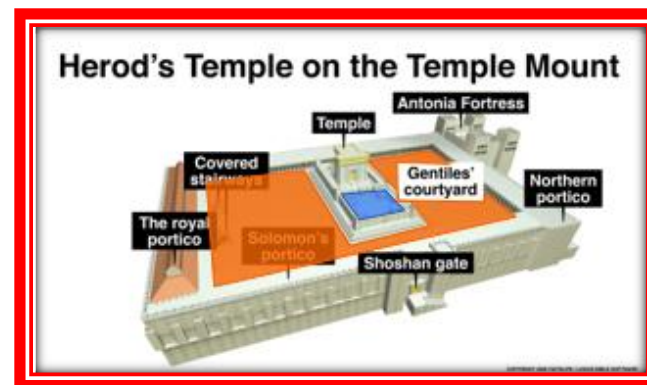


The Jewish temple that both Jesus and Paul frequently visited in Jerusalem was built by Herod the Great. The temple itself beautifully occupied the center of a large, raised platform called the "Temple Mount." The magnificent temple was surrounded by a series of courts which were each designed to discriminate among people on the basis of how near or far they could be to the Holy God Himself.

¹ Genesis 12:3

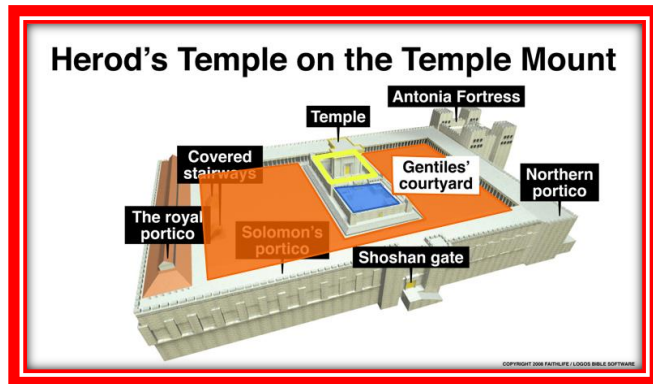


The outer-most and largest court surrounding the temple was called "the court of the Gentiles." Since God had originally intended for the Jewish people to be His witness to all the nations of the earth,¹ God had a place for Gentiles in worship. But before the death of Christ, the closest a non-Jew could get to God was this outer court. And in fact by the time of Jesus' ministry, the Jews had turned this outer court mostly into a "robber's den" rather than a place of worship for Gentiles.²

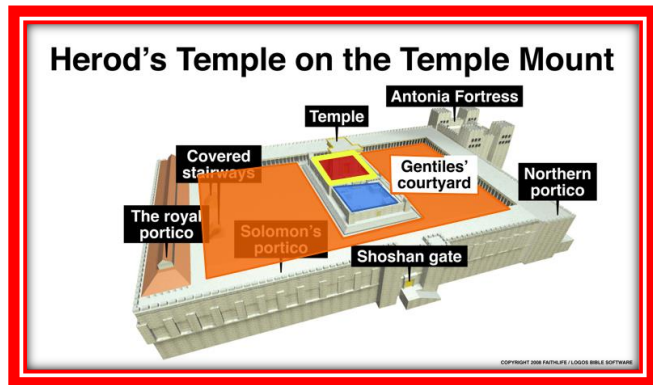


² Mark 11:17

From the court of the Gentiles, if you crossed a barricade and climbed 14 steps and then another 5 steps, you could enter the Court of the Women, which is highlighted in blue on the screen. This was the closest a Jewish woman could ever get to God's presence.



Next was the Court of Israel, pictured in yellow, where Jewish males could assemble for worship,



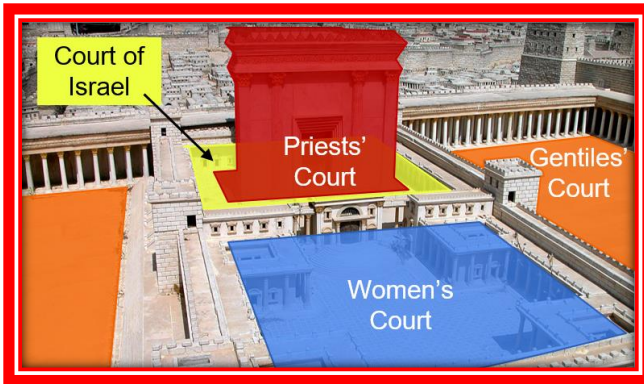
which surrounded the Court of the Priests, where the temple itself stood. Only male members of the tribe of

Levi could enter the Priests' court immediately surrounding God's dwelling place.



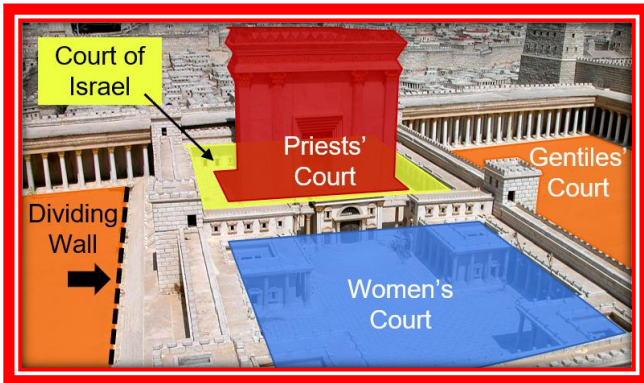
Then of course, inside the majestic temple building itself, a "holy place" was separated from the "most holy place" by a huge curtain. And since the very presence of God Himself lived in the most holy place behind the curtain, only 1 man – Israel's High Priest – could enter into the most Holy Place...and then just once a year after making a blood sacrifice for his own sins and for the sins of all the people.³

³ Leviticus 16



So, can you see how the temple itself was a visible picture of separation between God and man, and between different classes of people? The very layout of the temple illustrated how sin alienates all people from God and others.

And the Jewish people took these divisions very seriously.



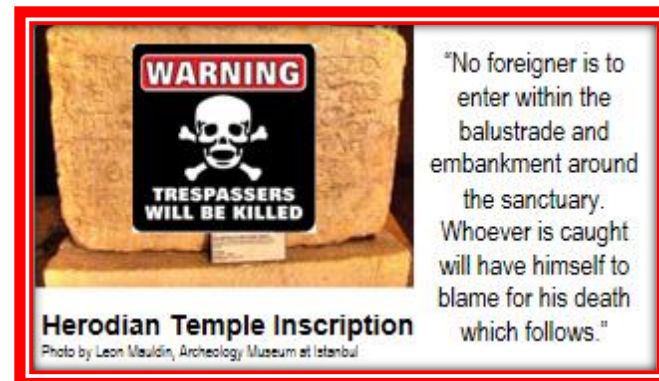
In fact, there was a clear barrier or dividing wall that separated all Gentiles from the Jews within the temple. This is the wall that Paul refers to in **verse 14** as the

“dividing wall of hostility.” For repeatedly inscribed on this wall in both Greek and Latin was a warning that read,



“No foreigner is to enter within the balustrade and embankment around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his death which follows.”

This is like a first century “Trespassers will be prosecuted” sign, right? Except that literally,



The barrier between Gentile and Jewish worship in the temple was full of “Trespassers will be Killed” signs.

Talk about hostility! Any non-Jewish person who dared to cross the temple's dividing wall would be immediately killed by the Jewish worshippers!

Now in some ways, it's hard for us to comprehend the severity of this level of religious discrimination today, right? But this was a huge reality for Paul and the Christians of the first century. The religious separation between a Jewish and a Gentile worshipper was a matter of life and death!

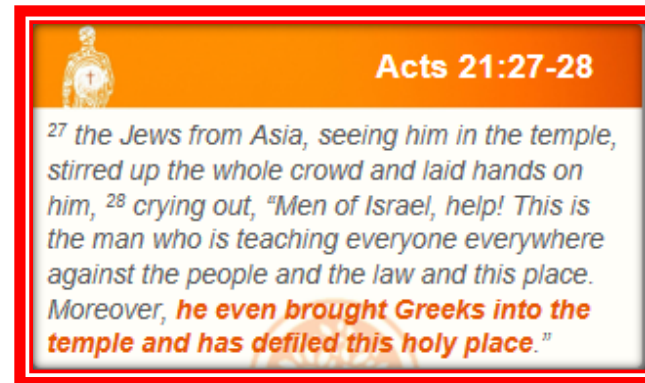
After all, do you remember what offense actually led Paul to be arrested and sent to Rome as a prisoner?

After all, Paul is writing **Ephesians** from a Roman prison. But what caused Paul to be arrested and imprisoned in the first place?

Well, open your Bibles to **Acts chapter 21**. In **Acts 21** Paul had returned to Jerusalem from his missionary journeys in order to deliver financial collections from the Gentile churches to the Jewish Christians. When Paul met with James in Jerusalem, James warned Paul of the strong Jewish nationalism in the city, and convinced Paul to take a Jewish vow of purification in the temple.⁴

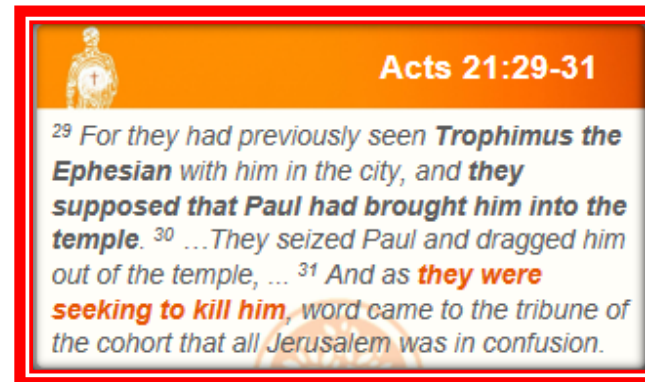
But while Paul was fulfilling his vow in the temple,

⁴ Acts 21:17-26



Verse 27 reads,

The Jews from Asia, seeing [Paul] in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."



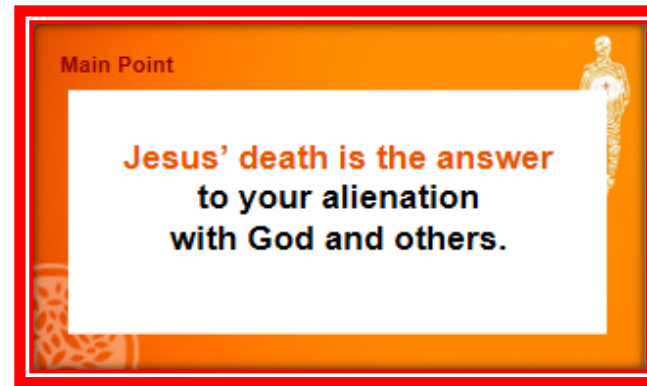
29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had

brought him into the temple. 30 Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. 31 And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.

So ...why was Paul arrested again? Because they thought Paul brought a Gentile past the dividing line of hostility in the temple. They tried to kill Paul for no other reason than that they thought Paul had brought an Ephesian believer closer to God than what they allowed!

Loved ones... don't miss this. What Paul is writing here to the Gentile believers in Ephesus is very powerful and personal. They know, and Paul knows... that this is the very issue that landed him in the very prison he now occupies as he is writing this letter! Paul the Jew, and Trophimus the Gentile, are both well known and dearly loved by the Ephesian church.

And that's what makes Paul's writing here so radical and life-changing. Because the religious difference between a Jew and Gentile was a matter of life and death in that day. There could be no greater relational brokenness and alienation between two people groups than that of 1st century Jews and Gentiles. Yet what Paul is about to argue is that sin...not national ethnicity... causes separation between people and God, and therefore sin is what causes division between people and people. The fundamental root cause of all our broken relationships is always sin, and that's why,



Jesus' death is the answer to all our alienation with both God and others.

Hopefully this historical background behind **Ephesians 2** will help us now better understand Paul's logic of our glorious unity in Christ. So let's dive into the first part of Paul's argument today, and then we'll finish this section next Sunday in "Part 2" as time allows.

Verse 11 begins by calling the Gentile Christians in Ephesus to remember their past. After **verses 4-10** celebrate our new individual position in God's saving grace, now the rest of **chapter 2** celebrates our relational position in Christ together. For if you are going to appreciate and enjoy the spiritual unity of Christ's church as God intends, then

Christian, **remember** your past alienation
apart from Jesus' death (11-12)

Christian, you must **remember** your past alienation apart from Jesus' death. Before God united us to Jesus by grace through faith, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. And sin always creates relational separation or alienation – both spiritually with God and socially with others.

So look carefully at **verse 11** now where Paul calls us to remember how our relationships were broken,

Christian, **remember** your past alienation
apart from Jesus' death (11-12)

- Socially with others (11)

Socially with others.

Spiritual unity with others starts with the humility that remembers where you came from yourself before Christ.

Therefore, - in light of the fact that you are now God's workmanship or trophy of His saving grace...

Therefore, - in light of the fact that your salvation was not because of anything you did or said...but was entirely an undeserved gift of God to you...

Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands...

Paul wants Gentile Christians to remember that before they were saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus' death, they were,

Christian, **remember** your past alienation
apart from Jesus' death (11-12)

- Socially with others (11)
 - Separated from the **Circumcision**
(external religion)

Separated from the Circumcision.

Now that's kind of a strange thing to say. So let me explain.

The Jewish people boastfully called themselves “the circumcision,” since all their males were circumcised in obedience to God’s law to set themselves apart as God’s special people. And the Jews had a derogatory term that they used for all Gentiles. Since they considered Gentiles religious outcasts, the Jews would call them “the uncircumcision.”

But here’s the irony of what Paul is saying in **verse 11**. Do you see how Paul repeats the phrase “in the flesh” twice in **verse 11**?

Gentiles in the flesh... called the circumcision which is made in the flesh by hands...

By repeating that phrase “in the flesh” twice Paul is emphasizing the external and superficial nature of the Jews’ judgments against the Gentiles.

The Jewish people missed God’s point about circumcision. God had intended for their physical circumcision to be a visible indicator of hearts that had been cut off from sin.⁵ But the Jews focused only on the outward mark of the flesh ...something their own hands could do... and thereby discriminated and judged others entirely based on externals.

And Paul is saying...Listen up Christian. Remember that apart from Jesus’ death your religious relationships with others were entirely based on external distinctions of visible customs, ceremonies, traditions, and good works. Apart from Christ, all of us were religious legalists, for we

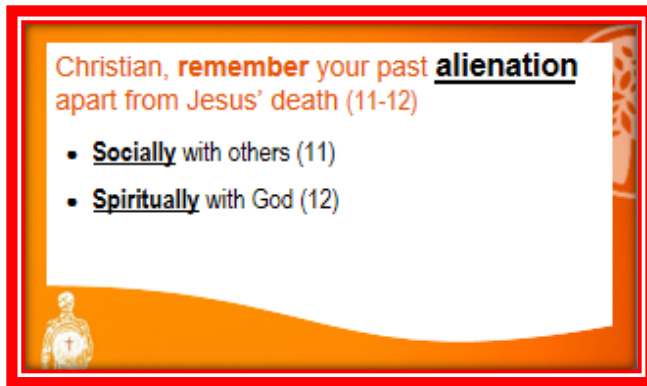
made up our own man-made system of religion or irreligion and then we judged others or were judged by others by a set of external rules designed to puff ourselves up and tear others down.

You see, apart from Jesus’ death everyone of us practices a religion of human accomplishment. We were trusting in the works of our own hands for our position with God. But as long as anyone is trusting in their own good works or external religion for their spiritual standing before God, they will only be judgmental, self-righteous, divisive, critical, and competitive. Religious legalism always destroys Christian unity.

So remember Christian where you came from. Jesus set us all free from trusting in physical distinctions of any kind. In light of all that God has done for you in Christ – as a free gift of His grace – remember how your former attempts at external religion only brought social alienation in your relationships with others.

And also, according to **verse 12**, remember how you were,

⁵ Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 5:6, 6:15



Spiritually separated with God before Jesus death.

Here in **verse 12**, Paul calls us to remember 5 different spiritual blessings that were out of reach of all Gentiles before Jesus died for our sins. In other words, Paul wants Christians to be humble enough to remember that all of our spiritual blessings in Christ are truly a gift to us... we didn't deserve them. The Gentile Christians in Ephesus had no right to claim any of the spiritual blessings that **chapter 1 and 2** have already described to be theirs in Christ.

Apart from Jesus' death all of us were spiritually alienated from God because at that time we were,

Separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Now since most of us today are not pure Jews, it's quite easy for us to relate with the Gentile Christians in Ephesus. So let's humble ourselves this morning by

considering each of these expressions of our alienation with God apart from Jesus' death.

First, Paul says the Gentiles were at that time,

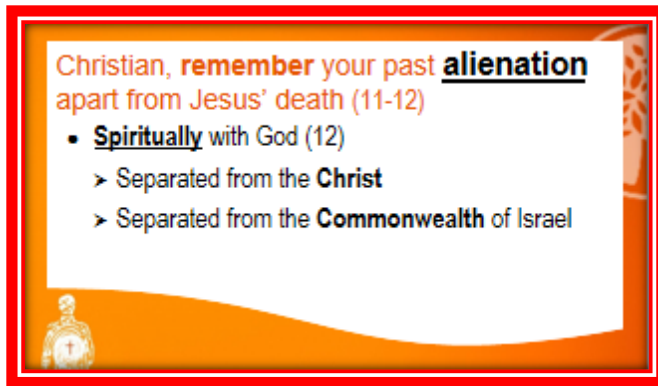


Separated from the Christ.

Meaning that Gentiles – as a people group – were not even aware of the Messiah. The religions and national histories of the Gentile people were at a huge disadvantage when compared to the Jews, for Gentile paganism knew nothing of a Messiah who would come to deliver people from their sins.

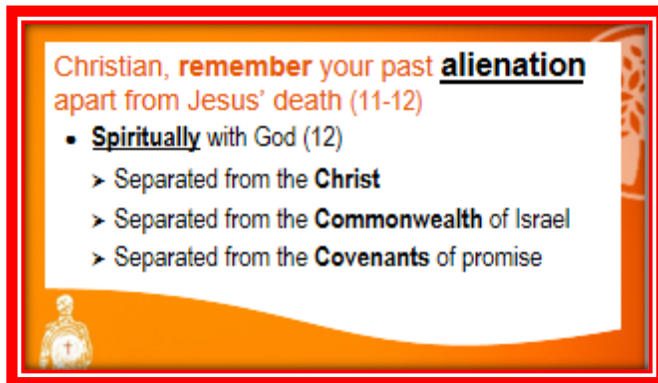
So remember that, apart from Jesus' death, all Gentiles like us would have remained in a sinful ignorance of God's Deliverer, the Christ.

Remember also, that before Christ all Gentiles were,



Separated from the Commonwealth of Israel.

Commonwealth is a word meaning nation or citizenship. So all Gentiles were outside of participation God's blessed nation. The only way for Gentiles to participate in God's blessings before Christ was for them to first become Jewish – just as Ruth the Moabitess⁶ and Naaman the Syrian⁷ did in the Old Testament.



Us Gentiles were also separated from the Covenants of promise. Meaning that as a people group, Gentiles had

⁶ Ruth 1:16

no promise or covenant from God for blessing, or salvation, or a future kingdom. God made a special covenant with Abraham and his descendants in **Genesis chapter 12** – not with all the rest of the nations on the earth. Therefore all sinners like us, who were outside of Israel's promise, were forever separated from these benefits.



Therefore we were all separated from the Confidence of hope. Apart from Christ, life was ultimately meaningless and without purpose. Apart from Jesus' death that killed our sin and united us together in God's family, our only hope was despair.

We were all without God in the world,

⁷ 2 Kings 5:17

Christian, **remember** your past **alienation** apart from Jesus' death (11-12)

- **Spiritually** with God (12)
 - Separated from the **Christ**
 - Separated from the **Commonwealth** of Israel
 - Separated from the **Covenants** of promise
 - Separated from the **Confidence** of hope
 - Separated from the **Creator** in the world

Separated from the Creator in the world.

Our Creator God is the source of every good thing. But when anyone is separated from personal knowledge of the Creator, the result is that creation itself gets worshipped, and our souls are eternally separated from the very God we were created to worship.

What's Paul's point? Therefore, in light of all the grace that God has given you in your salvation...remember that you didn't deserve any of it. You Gentiles were at a severe spiritual disadvantage...left in a godless worldview of hopeless humanism, materialism, and paganism.

Apart from the death of Jesus in your place, you were socially alienated with others because of the pride of religious legalism, and you were spiritually alienated with God because of religious ignorance.

But, verse 13 almost shouts,

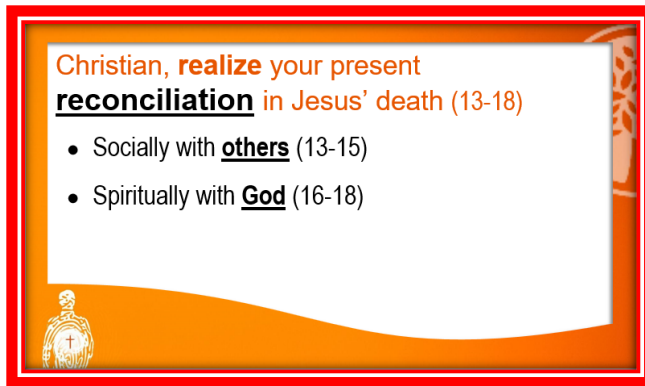
But now, in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ!

Christian, **realize** your present **reconciliation** in Jesus' death (13-18)



We will plan to unpack these verses more next week, but just for now... **Christian, realize your present reconciliation in Jesus' death (13-18)**

Now that you have been made alive with Jesus, and you've been raised up together with Jesus, and you've been seated with Jesus in the heavenly places... now us Gentiles who used to have to stay in the outer court, behind that dividing wall of hostility...now we have been brought near by the blood of Christ!



We have been reconciled socially with others, and spiritually with God!

Trophimus and Paul can now both enter not just the Court of Israel, but by the blood of Christ, both Trophimus and Paul and every other person who is saved by God's grace can dwell together with a Holy God in the holiest of holies... and not be consumed!

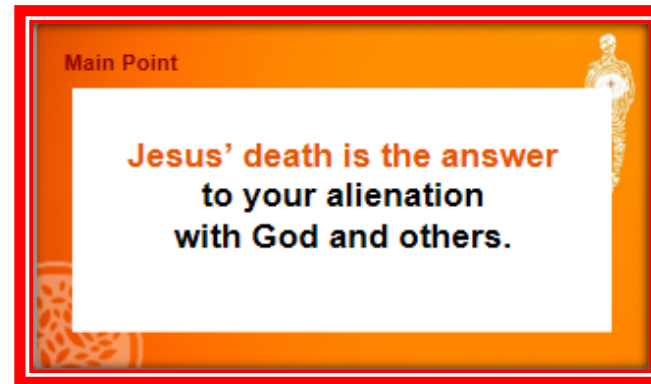
Look at **verse 14**,

For Christ Jesus Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility. Notice, what brought relational discrimination to an end? No work of human flesh, but the death of Jesus Himself. The sacrifice of Jesus kills all the hostility of religious and irreligious pride.

There's no more external ceremonies like physical circumcision that define God's people. The ceremonial law of the commandments has been abolished, **verse 15** says. All so that Jesus might create a new humanity – that's neither Jewish nor Gentile – but a spiritual body – a

body of peace where all sinners can be reconciled to God through Jesus' cross.

So much more to say about all of this, but we'll need to wait until next week to really do justice to **verses 13-22**.



For now, I just want you to understand clearly that Jesus' death is the answer to your alienation with God and others. Because Jesus' death paid for sin. And our sin is the root cause behind all of our separation with God and others.

Jesus died on the cross, and shed His blood, and gave His own flesh so that Jews and Gentiles alike could all have peace with God, and have eternal access to our Heavenly Father.

So how will you respond to this good news? Through the Scriptures, God has seen fit to reveal to you what many Gentiles in years past could have never known. Jesus – the sinless God-Man, is the Messiah. His death and resurrection is the source of eternal hope for every

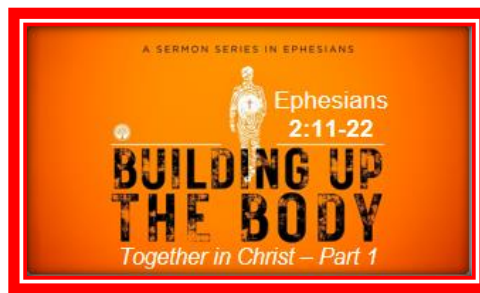
person who believes in Him! You no longer need to live estranged from God or others.

Will you believe that Jesus died to pay for your sins? Will you trust in the sacrifice of Christ on your behalf, instead of your own religious works or external distinctions for your spirituality? Will you remember that all of your salvation is by God's grace alone, and not your own doing? Salvation is the gift of God.

Dear friend... turn from your sins. Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus so that you may experience eternal peace with God.



And next week we'll talk more about how Jesus' death makes it possible for us to then reflect our peace with God by making peace with others.

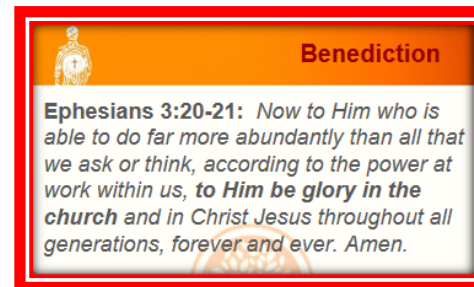


Praise God for the cross of Christ, where sin was put to death so that we could all be made one in Christ.

Let's pray.

<<The Church's One Foundation>>

- * New Adult Discipleship Electives start today!
- * Newcomer's Brunch today at 9:30a in Intersection Café



Let's pray aloud our benediction from **Ephesians 3:20-21**:

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.



Please show this slide immediately after the conclusion of the Benediction in both 1st and 2nd services for 2 minutes.

Recommended Resources on Ephesians 2:11-22:

- Ruth 1:16
- Psalm 118:22-23; 133:1-3
- Isaiah 9:6
- Matthew 5:9; 27:50-51
- John 14:27; 16:33; 17:21-23
- Acts 2:39; 21:27-36
- Romans 2:28-29; 5:8-10; 10:12-13
- 1 Corinthians 3:11; 6:19-20
- 2 Corinthians 10:12
- Galatians 3:28
- Philippians 1:27-2:4; 3:20-21
- Colossians 1:20-22; 2:16-23
- Hebrews 13:20-21
- James 2:1-13
- 1 Peter 2:5-10

- <https://rw360.org/>
- <https://www.9marks.org/article/work-for-unity/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/Court-of-the-Gentiles.html>
- <https://www.bibleplaces.com/blog/2012/02/q-illustrations-of-herods-temple/>

- *United*, Trillia Newbell
- *A Plea for Unity*, John MacArthur
- *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande
- *Bloodlines*, John Piper

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Read Romans 9:4-5. What advantages did the Jews have over Gentiles before Jesus came to earth? Now that Jesus died for all who believe in Him, what spiritual advantage do Jews have over Gentiles today? (c.f. Acts 2:39; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13-22, 3:6)
2. Read Acts 21:27-36. What city was Trophimus from? Since this was the event that led to Paul's imprisonment in Rome (from which he wrote Ephesians), how does this add understanding to Ephesians 2:14-16?
3. Review Ephesians 2:13, 14, and 16. Why is Jesus' bloody death necessary for our peace with God and with others? I.e. What is the ultimate cause of our alienation and division from God and others?
4. Review Ephesians 2:19-22. What are the three pictures Paul uses to describe our unity together in Christ? Which is your favorite, and why?
5. Read 1 Samuel 16:7 and 2 Corinthians 10:12. Do you ever ground your own identity in your comparison with others? Why are comparisons and judgments based on external differences so destructive to our unity together in Christ?